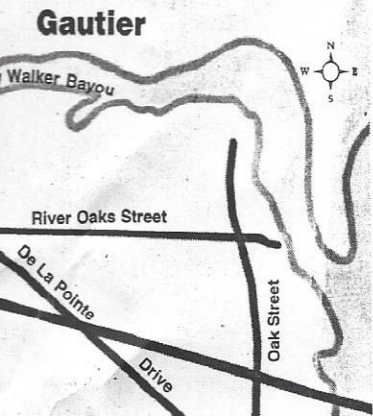




Staff Photo/Christy Jernigan
Belden and Janet Ramstad
displaying old photographs.



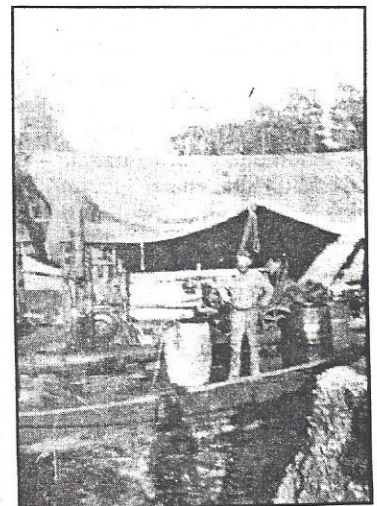
Special to The Mississippi Press
Children from the Martin family paused while playing to pose for this snapshot. They are, from left, Herbert Martin, Edith Martin Roberts, Mary Martin Peterson and David Martin.



Staff Graphic/Doug Rouse



Special to The Mississippi Press
Henry Gautier with some friends sitting on a tree on the beach near Twelve Oaks. His second wife, Laura Gautier, is the third from the right.



Special to The Mississippi Press
Walter Fuller moving timber by the water at the Creosote Plant in the West Pascagoula

approached the city last year about hosting the event since Gautier did not have a celebration to honor Independence Day.

From there, the idea for the Old Fashioned Fourth of July began.

"Things are kinda falling into place," Gallagher said.

Mobile

From Page 1-C

interactive exhibit takes a look at major events and people that have shaped American society.

Brookley Field off Michigan Avenue from Interstate 10. Shuttle buses will be available for \$2 per person 5 and older round trip. Parking will not be available.



Old Country Store
Moss Point, MS

Leonard Fuller's stories recount past

By Valerie Winn

It's after 3 p.m. and all the pupils have left. The only noises are the sweeping brooms of the custodians and the muffled voices of teachers as they walk through the hallways and out the doors.

Principal Leonard Fuller sits back in his office chair and relaxes for a few minutes. The walls behind his desk are decorated with framed needlework and sayings that cleverly remind him of the honor of his profession, his colleagues and his state.

As I sit across from him in a soft, armchair, he begins to talk about his time as a youth in Gautier, back when he was a pupil in this very same building.

"When I was a child in Gautier," he begins, "the major portion of the community was around the Treosote plant (where Black Hawk Construction Co. now stands). That's where most of the houses were built." Then, (about 40 years ago) the train depot was the big meeting place where people would gather to talk while waiting for the train.

"That was just about our activity for the day," he said, "Waiting for the number four train to come in."

When the number four arrived,

the local folks would visit with the passengers as the train's water supply was replenished. Gautier was a major stopping area for passenger trains going from Mobile to New Orleans.

Fuller smiles as he talks about those days in Gautier. And sometimes his eyes twinkle as he adds a little color and folklore to his stories.

One of his favorites is about the founding of Gautier. It's the same tale he told at the installation of Gautier's first mayor and city council last June. It goes like this: Fernandez Gautier came to the area to cut virgin timber in the 1900's when the sawmill industry was in it's heyday.

He was traveling down the Pascagoula River by flatboat - or barge - as they were sometimes called. "That was the only way to travel down the river," he adds.

When Gautier and his crew came into the West Pascagoula River a cow fell off the barge in the middle river. The boatmen tried desperately to pull the cow back onto the barge, but couldn't. So they turned the cow's legs and floated the animal to shore where the Old Place is now.

Because of a cantankerous old cow that refused to get back on the

boat Gautier was founded. Fuller concludes with a smile that makes one wonder about the authenticity of the story.

Fuller makes up stories like these "just for the humor of it," he said.

Other accounts tell about early school days when Fuller's grandfather was president of the Board of Trustees. He had more children in school than the other parents, so he was also made the school disciplinarian. One of the major decisions of the school board those days was to build a separate outhouse for boys and girls. It seemed that whenever the pupils were allowed to use the outhouse, between classes, the girls always outran the boys, forcing them to go elsewhere.

Fuller's family history and the history of Gautier Elementary have been intertwined for several generations. His mother taught at the school about 25 years. His father, Walter Fuller, drove a school bus. And that's how his parents met - through their associations with the school.

Later Leonard was a representative and went to Perkinson when the Institution of Higher Learning held a meeting to decide where to

put the junior college. Fuller collected 182 signatures on a petition to build the college in Gautier. That number represented almost the entire voting population of Gautier.

Fuller is nearing his retirement next year. But that doesn't mean he will be leaving Gautier Elementary. For it - like the rest of Gautier - will be with him in his stories and memories.

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**GROWIN' UP ON
THE SINGING RIVER**



**AS REMEMBERED BY
LEONARD E. FULLER, SR.**

JUNE 24, 2009

ON HIS BIRTHDAY

The beautiful Singing River runs through the middle of Jackson County, MS, and into the Gulf of Mexico. Here I have lived on the banks of this river for the better part of my life as did my father and my grandfather. Having already reared our three children here, my wife and I are now helping to raise five grandchildren to enjoy and love this river as we do.

I proudly live in the City of Gautier, MS, a lovely small town nestled among massive oak trees on the banks of the Singing River. Recently, Hurricane Katrina took many of our stately, grand old homes and left a sad mess of destruction and debris. However, the people here are a hardy and resilient group who will certainly bring the community back to its former glory.

The City of Gautier is named for the Gautier families who settled in this area. Fernando Gautier was one of the first settlers who came here because of the timber industry. The City Council and newer citizens debate how to pronounce Gautier, but old timers just smile and let anyone call it anything they believe to be correct. That attitude is a reflection of our southern charm! My rather unauthenticated story of how Gautier was founded is a favorite of mine. It claims Fernando Gautier had land grants in this area and was traveling on the river to move his family here by river raft. With the exception of the Gulf, the Singing River was the only means of travel to get into this area. Moving down the river, one of Fernando's cows fell off the raft and into the river. The Gautiers made every attempt to retrieve the cow, but could not get her back on the raft. Consequently, they just allowed the cow to swim to the shore, and after surveying the area, they decided to stay. This unofficial story tells how Gautier was founded by a cantankerous old cow.

After Hurricane Katrina, I was amazed to read that a wall of water twenty to twenty-five feet came in over the river and flooded much of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The wall of water caused much destruction. It is a wonder to me that the river is still here, but as the song goes, "she just keeps on rollin' along."

The Singing River is a very popular and important river in Jackson County. Many of the businesses in the county are named for the river, including the hospital, the power company, and even an elementary school. The river got its name from an old Indian legend. The legend tells the story of a battle between the Biloxi Indians and Pascagoula Indians. At the height of the battle, the Pascagoula Indians, nearing defeat and fearing capture, decided to join hands and walk into the river singing. Mrs. Josie Gautier, a colorful resident and descendent of Fernando Gautier immortalized the legend in her song, "Have You Heard the Legend of the Pascagoula Indians?" This composition later became our state song. One of my favorite school memories is of Miss Josie playing the piano and leading the Gautier Elementary students in singing this popular song of the 1940's.

The location of the Singing River has caused a lot of controversy over the years. A local politician from Gautier made the statement that the Singing River was on the

west side. This disturbed some of the older settlers in Pascagoula. However, if one would only look at a map, one would notice the main channel does mostly follow the west section, but part of it drains off on the east side. The controversy died down somewhat when someone asked, "Then where is the Pascagoula River since the east side tributary has been called that in the past?" I made a suggestion in the Chamber of Commerce meeting that we should hire divers to go down on both sides of the river to count the remains of the Indian artifacts. The river with the most artifacts, of course, would be called the Singing River. Nobody liked my suggestion, however, and they have been excluding me from chamber meetings ever since!

I still sit on the front porch each morning and watch the river go by. Sadly, there have been changes in the river over the many centuries it has been here. I remember when dolphins used to come up past the highway bridge and make their funny noises. The water was clear and salty then. But, over the years, pollution has taken its toll, and sometimes now the water is dark and murky. Since some of the chemical plants and the paper mill have gone, though, I have hopes of the river returning to its former beauty.

The river has always been a water haven for our family. In my childhood, I lived in the river. In the summer, we would shave our heads so as not to worry with wet hair all of the time. Nice wharves with diving boards, fishing towers, and screened-in fishing tables jutted out into the river. We had wonderful amenities before we even knew what amenities were! We would practice our diving day in and day out with childhood hopes of being in the Olympics one day. I would sit up in the fish tower for hours watching a big mullet come up from the deep and catch a small shrimp by the water's edge. We also had a rope that stretched from a big oak tree to a post a good distance into the river. Attaching a pulley to it, we could ride a great distance out over the river before dropping into it. Once one of our neighbors took his turn, but didn't turn loose until he hit "smack dab into the post." It took him the rest of the day to remember who he was.

Many times we swam across the river. On one such occasion, my mother spotted us in the middle of the river. She yelled and screamed for us to come back. Most people don't know that in the south everyone has a double name. Not only is this custom used to honor all the kinfolks by using their names, but it is also used as a disciplinary tool. When mother would call us by our first name, we knew everything was calm and pleasant in the house. But, when she called our first and middle name together, there would be trouble "abrewing" in the household and we knew we were then the unwanted center of attention. However, when our mother stuck her head out from behind the front porch screen door and called our full name, we knew that the gates of Hades had been opened, and we were about to be thrown in. When my mother stood on the bank and hollered our full names so that we could hear it in the middle of the river, we knew that it was going to be, "Katie, bar the door!"

My brother, Sonny Boy, and I had many glorious and grand adventures on the river. One day he came home with a small airplane motor with which he had the grand expectation of building an airboat. We took one of our dad's old skiffs and mounted the motor on the back. However, we forgot to make some arrangements to steer it. Firing off the motor, it became a very elusive little boat, darting here and there as it picked up speed. We found that we could lean from side to side and persuade it to go somewhat in the way which we intended. It finally turned and headed toward the marsh, and there was no way to regain control. Landing on a big cypress stump at such fast speed put me about fifty feet into the marsh. The bottom was torn out of our boat, so it sank into the river quickly. I think the boat with the air motor is still down at the bottom of the river!

As I was approaching my high school days, my father bought a 38' boat with a nice cabin and a teakwood deck. Overnight, we automatically became deep sea tour guides. The boat was named, "The Seven Stars." The name of the boat came from the Book of Revelation where John saw the vision of Christ returning from heaven. In his right hand, Jesus held seven stars. It was a good thing the boat had a religious name to help us through all the narrow escapes from storms, running aground, and almost sinking a couple of times. We spent a lot of time just floating in the gulf, waiting for someone to tow us in. The boat eventually caught fire, burned to the water line and sank to the bottom of the river, but it brought a lot of fun into our lives over the years.

My father had many wonderful stories about growing up on the river and using his ingenuity to "work the river." He would fascinate me with his tales, and one of my favorites is about his working on the river at a young age hauling logs from north of Vancleave. He explained to his listeners how a spike was driven in one log and attached by a chain to a spike in another log, connecting the logs together. The logs would be strung out for almost a mile in a single row. It would take the tugboat all day to pull the logs to the L&N Railroad Sawmill. The tugboat had an air-cooled motor that made a popping noise, and the popping noise could be heard for great distances as the sound traveled over the water. When the logs finally arrived at the sawmill, they were pulled up and made into creosoted railroad ties.

The creosote plant in Gautier was the center point of the town from the 1920's to the 1940's, and the major industry in West Jackson County at that time. The L&N Railroad discontinued the process in the 1950's because the creosote was considered to be a hazardous material. The railroad also closed down all of the homes that were built around the plant, and the employees were required to move. My grandfather was foreman of the sawmill, and we lived in what was called the "big house" connected by a veranda to a large oak tree in the center. I remember what an exciting day it was when we first got electricity there. An oil lamp which hung in the center of the room and could be pulled up and down to light was replaced by a single electrical cord with a light bulb that could miraculously be turned off and on by pulling the string! We thought we had become extremely modernized!

There is an old saying that "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." This is the reason my parents kept us so busy with yard work and household chores. My father believed there were three pieces of wood necessary to raise a child: 1) a paddle for discipline; 2) a hoe handle for work; and 3) a church bench for salvation. This kept our attention throughout our lives. It was a hard, fast rule that we had to attend church every Sunday or we were not allowed to do anything on Sunday afternoon. We would do our duty in the morning so we could be turned loose to put our devilish minds to work for some mischievous afternoon escapades.

Every now and then some of the local churches would have their baptismal services on the river where the new Highway 90 bridge is located today. They would meet at the Old Place grounds and walk down the slope to a nice sandy bottomed place at river's edge. This was a great opportunity for us to do something devilish. Swimming in the river most of the time, we knew where all the snags, logs and stumps were. Once we decided we could enliven the service by pulling an old log out of the marsh, floating it close to the baptismal service, and yelling, "Alligator! Alligator!" Immediately, the congregation ran up the hill screaming. However, the local pastor knew us all by name, and his scolding rang out loud and clear. "You boys get away from here!" He asked the congregation to return, and they continued their service.

Gautier was a very close knit family community, and everyone knew everyone (and everyone's business!) If any of the kids did something wrong, the word would be passed throughout the neighborhood until our parents heard it. Then sparks would fly at home!

In the south, we were taught respect....especially to the adults, and most of all, to our families. There were large families in those days, and it was important to keep up honorable appearances "for the sake of the family." The southern custom was also to say, "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am" when answering adults. My grandfather had thirteen children, and they married into other families in the community. At one time, I was kin to half the people in Gautier, either first cousins or second and third cousins twice removed....whatever that means! My activities were very closely monitored in those days by loving but strict adult kin.

Each Christmas after the early service at St. Pierre's Episcopal Church on the bayou, parishioners would go from house to house for refreshments until they had too much to drink and started falling out along the wayside. Every family would have their specialties of food and drink prepared for this annual custom. Fresh baked bread, homemade candies, ham and turkey with oyster dressing — so many wonderful things to eat and drink were available in large quantities. It was truly a kid's paradise. Mr. LeBatard made homemade wine, and as youngsters we became quite adept at slipping around for a sip or two. My grandmother made fruitcakes after Thanksgiving, doused them generously with bourbon, wrapped them in sheets,

and placed them in the old family trunk. It was her pleasure to share the fruitcakes with everyone. My mother made the best eggnog, so all would also stop by for the "nog" accompanied by her date rolls and "rocks" cookies. Mr. Wallace Quinn would have Neapolitan ice cream (layers of chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry) shipped in. All the kids wanted to go there first. We thought we had died and gone to heaven. Miss Josie Gautier put on one of the more elaborate spreads. She gave all the kids a homemade candied apple and a caramel popcorn ball. Everybody loved Miss Josie! Mr. Gollotte had a small picket fence around his house, and by the time all the revelers got there, the custom was to jump over the fence if sobriety permitted. My Uncle Roland never made it. His feet always got caught in the slats, so he would be left hanging there until the others returned to disengage him from the fence. After all the over-indulging and merry-making, nobody would visit each other for almost two weeks. I was sometimes glad Christmas had come and gone and that I hadn't been "busted."

All families in Gautier had livestock during the 20's, 30's, and 40's because there were no stock laws. Most everyone had a cow to milk and hogs to eat. Tags or some markings were placed on the livestock, and they were turned loose. Most of the cows would spend their time at night around the creosote plant in order to keep the flies off. Once my Aunt Sarah had to work late and was walking home on a dark night. The cows were lying in the middle of the road, and Aunt Sarah was found sitting straddled across one cow, and she was giving those cows a piece of her mind. That night I learned a lot of curse words which I loved to practice as a second language until my mother overheard me.

Our milk cow was named "Hortense." I think my father named her for some of his in-laws. She was a most cantankerous old cow who would never "come up" in the evening to be milked. I had to walk all over Gautier to find her most of the time. Since the creosote plant was such a popular places for the livestock, I would usually find her there trying to avoid the flies. I hated that old cow. She would try to make me late for my dates every Friday or Saturday night. Taking longer than usual to find her one night, I decided to just ride her home with a downhill trot. As I tried to milk the cow hurriedly, I stopped short, filled the bucket with water, and told my mother the cow didn't give anything but "blue john" that night. My mother began watching the milk production a little more closely after that, and I didn't ever get away with any more of those tricks.

The only store around the creosote plant by the railroad was a mercantile store. That meant, of course, that most of the goods were contained in large quantities. We loved to go to the store with our mother and pick out the cow feed because it arrived in beautiful cloth bags which my mother would amazingly turn into shirts and dresses which we wore to school. Everyone teased each other about our "feed sack" clothes, but it didn't matter because all the other kids were wearing them also.

My grandmother bought coffee in forty pound sacks at the mercantile. The coffee was green, so it had to be roasted and ground. My job was to crank the handle on the coffee grinder because coffee was made every afternoon at 4:00 which was a French custom that is carried on even today in the Fuller family. Many workers came over, sat on the veranda, and enjoyed coffee at Miss Minnie's for years. Later, my mother who was a school teacher, carried on this custom adding delicious homemade yeast rolls, fig preserves and scuppernong jelly to accompany the coffee.

The only proprietor of the mercantile store that I remember was Pete Zeigler. The store had two large counters on each side with all of the goods on high shelves. We had to tell Mr. Pete what we wanted, and he would wait on us. Everything bought would be put on a charge account, and at the end of the month, all the families would pay their bill. All business transacted was done with a shake of the hand. My father worked at the shipyard during the war, so my mother would buy a loaf of sliced white bread for him to take sandwiches in his lunch. As a result, someone had to go to the store to purchase the bread about every two or three days. My brother and I would fight over who would go to the store because we found out we could add a drink and candy to the bill along with the bread. I remember once when the bill was given to my mother, it had repeated entries of bread, candy, drink; bread, candy, drink; bread, candy, drink -- and from that day forward we did not go to the store unless we had our own money!

My Aunt Nellie May Wells would send us money for our birthdays. We could not wait to run to Mr. Zeigler's store to spend it. My brother and I had decided what we wanted one day, so with our younger sister JoAnn reluctantly tagging along, we made the delightful trip to the store. Entering the store, my brother said, "Mr. Zeigler, I want ten cents worth of that red stripped candy on the top shelf." With the candy out of reach, Mr. Zeigler went to the back of the store, got the ladder, climbed up to the top shelf and retrieved the big jar of candy. He meticulously counted out ten cents worth of candy, replaced the top, and climbed back up the ladder to return the candy to the top shelf. After that he returned the ladder to the back of the store. Returning, he said, "OK, boys and girls, what else can I do for you?" I spoke up and said, "Mr. Zeigler, I want a dime's worth of that candy, too." Looking exasperated and a little harshly at us, he again got the ladder and jar and counted out ten cents worth for me, but stopped shortly saying to my sister, "Do you want ten cents worth of this candy, too?" She replied, "No, Mr. Zeigler." Returning the ladder, Mr. Zeigler asked, "Will there be anything else?" My sister spoke up and said, "Mr. Zeigler, I just want a nickel's worth of that candy."

The Gautier School was not very big in the 1940's when I was enrolled there. All the students from kindergarten through eighth grade were housed in three classrooms. I used to tell people I stayed in the same room for three years which was true because there were three grades in one room. Mr. Liston Draughn was our teacher in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. He had been in the state legislature, and at times, he would go on and on, reminiscing about his terms in the legislature.

On more than one occasion, we pretended to go to the restroom and slipped off to the local bayou to go "skinny dipping." Mr. Draughn never missed us. I also recall coming home from school one day about ten o'clock, and my grandmother asked me why I was so early. I told her the basketball burst. We spent so much time playing basketball, I'm afraid basketball was just about all we learned!

Swimming was a major activity in the 40's and early 50's because the river and the Mississippi Sound provided a lot of places to swim. On the front beach, noted educator Miss Kitty Shepherd had a summer camp, mostly for boys and girls from Mobile, AL. She had heard what a good swimmer I was, and she asked me to be a lifeguard. I knew nothing about saving someone's life. When we would go swimming, it was each man for himself. I pretended I knew all about life guarding, but when I look back, I'm extremely grateful we had no emergencies real emergencies. I remember the greatest surprise of the summer came when Miss Shepherd introduced me to the counselor for the girls. She was standing there in a skimpy swimsuit. I'd never seen a bathing suit like that because we always swam in an old pair of cut-off jeans. I fell in love at first sight with Sue Betsby who immediately became my heartthrob. The most exciting times we had were the bonfires on the beach. It was a summer to remember. A few years later, I read in the newspaper where she had won the "Miss Alabama" Beauty Pageant. I felt kind of proud of myself for having such good taste in the ladies even in my early teen years!

As I reflect on my life growing up and living on the river, I could go on and on about the youthful escapades that describe our Huckleberry Finn - Tom Sawyer experiences, but somewhere this saga must end! So, this last story might be called "My Brother's Most Ingenious Scheme." One summer day, my brother came up with a most brilliant idea of making diving equipment to go down to the bottom of the river. To make this marvelous contraption, we used a large tin bucket to place over his head. After cutting a hole and putting in a piece of glass for a lookout, we then soldered a pipe at the top where the garden hose would be attached. Since this was my brother's idea, he left me to do the work of pumping the air to him with a bicycle tire pump. Attaching two large railroad irons to his waist, he jumped off the end of the wharf. I pumped as hard as I could and as long as I could, trying to force air to him. Obviously, however, we did not understand the laws of physics as related to the placement of air. The problem was that we needed two pumps and a valve that would cause continuous air flow. When I would pump down, it would force the air in, but when I would pull up on the single pump, it would suck the air back. Therefore, my brother just barely made it to the bank and pulled himself up to regain what he thought was his last breath of air. Another scientific fact of which we were unaware was that the deeper one goes into the river, the more pressure is exerted. This caused the tin bucket we had on his head to become molded to his head. It took us the better part of the day with can openers to get the bucket off his head. So much for our exciting diving experience in the Singing River!

Gautier, on the banks of the Singing River, will always be my home. I will continue to sit on my porch and tell anyone who will listen about my adventures on the river as I was growin' up....or maybe I'll just keep on watching the river going by as I listen to make sure it keeps on singing. Today we have a new four-lane highway bridge crossing the river. A new green sign with "Singing River" stands beside the highway. Each day I pass the sign with pride and sometimes I think, just maybe, the sign winks at me. If you come to Gautier and stand on the banks of the Singing River, you may also hear the river sing ... or maybe it's the First Baptist Church choir practice in full session!



THE SEVEN STARS

Revelation 1:12-16 depicts the return of Jesus Christ to earth as seen by John. It reads:

"I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven lamp stands and among the lamp stands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held "Seven Stars" and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword."

The book of Revelation is built around the number seven, and here the seven stars represent the seven churches of Asia; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Ephesus and Laodicea.

For many years our family has given the name "Seven Stars" to all of our boats. The name came to us from a boat bought by Walter Fuller from Pass Christian, MS in 1946. The boat was a 38 foot double mast schooner made of cypress boards with caulking, and the deck was made of teak. The middle cabin housed a galley with double bunks below deck. The helm contained a large manual wooden rudder. The boat had been used to carry mail and supplies out of Bay St. Louis to and from Pass Christian, MS prior to its sale to Walter Fuller. After the wooden bridge was built to connect the two cities, the boat was decommissioned. Its homeport was Pass Christian where it was modernized. The back mast was taken out, and the center board and wooden rudder were removed. A Gray Marine Allis Chalmers gas engine was placed behind the steps to the galley, and a deck hatch was cut in the deck to afford access to the engine. A canvas top with an iron railing covered the entire boat. The bottom of the boat was recaulked and painted with red lead paint, the sides from the waterline were painted white and the gun rail was painted blue. Truly, the "Seven Stars" was a beautiful boat, and we were very proud owners.

After the boat was purchased by Walter Fuller in 1946, its homeport was Gautier, MS. The "Seven Stars" was used as a charter deep sea fishing boat, docked at the Singing River Motel near the old bridge on US 90 until a hurricane destroyed the motel in 1947. Following the hurricane, the boat was moved to the Fuller Home, Oak Villa, on the Singing River. It

continued to be used extensively for charter from 1947-51.

A memorable outing with a party from Hattiesburg for a deep sea fishing trip left all participants, both crew and guests, with a most unforgettable fishing trip. The "Seven Stars" pulled out from the dock early one Saturday morning on its way to the open Gulf. Passing through Horn Island Pass and on by Bell Buoy would put one into the open Gulf of Mexico. On that particular morning, with the sun shimmering on the water and everyone in great spirits, it wasn't long before schools of Spanish Mackerel and Bonita were in the water everywhere. To the delight of the fishermen, everyone on board began bringing in fish. With the excitement of everyone busily catching fish, we neglected to check on the large squall that was quickly approaching from the West. Soon the wind and high waves were upon us. The "Seven Stars" began to pitch and roll, causing great alarm for the "Sears Roebuck" fishermen, as Walter Fuller called them. The fun was over, and everyone had to buckle down to ride out the bad weather. Captain Fuller navigated the "Seven Stars" back to Horn Island through the ship channel where six and eight foot waves continued to pound the boat for over an hour. The bow repeatedly went out of the water, and the boat would fall back into the trough of the waves with a pounding force. Leonard Fuller was in the galley trying to hold together the pots and pans and everything else which was bouncing around. Picking up loose items and trying to put them back into the cabinets was a futile task. Looking at the floor, Leonard noticed water was coming in the galley. The bilge pump was running full speed, but with little effect. Some of the fishing party had to man the pumps to keep the water stable. The problem was the cypress hull was being pounded by the waves so hard that it pulled the caulking out from around the keel. Captain Fuller had to navigate the "Seven Stars" behind Horn Island where calmer waters prevailed and where the boat could be protected enough to make emergency repairs. Leonard went overboard to recaulk parts of the hull. Holding his breath as long as possible, he would go underwater and work until he could make temporary repairs. To the great relief of all aboard, the "Seven Stars" made it back to port with no further problems, and it was pulled up on dry dock the next day for full repairs.

Looking back on the adventures of the "Seven Stars", the repeated rescues of Walter Anderson (world renowned artist of Shearwater) had to rank among the most interesting. Agnes (Sissie) Grimstead married Walter Anderson, and they made their home at Oldsfield (the historical Lewis

Anderson, and they made their home at Oldsfield (the historical Lewis plantation home) on the beach in Gautier, MS. Mrs. Anderson taught school with Marie Fuller, and they became very good friends. The Anderson and Fuller children played together at Oldsfield and at the Fuller home, Oak Villa. Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Fuller formed a Sunday School for their children and other neighborhood children at St. Pierre's Episcopal Church on the bayou. Mrs. Anderson donated two large vases for flowers on the church altar. In later years, two brass vases replaced the large green pottery vases made by Peter Anderson (Peter, the Potter, of Shearwater). The vases were given to Marie Fuller by Mrs. Anderson for helping with her husband Walter Anderson. The vases today remain in the Fuller family.

Many times Walter Anderson would row his small boat out to Horn Island to paint and live in seclusion. Countless storms and hurricanes would occur on the Mississippi Sound, making it very dangerous to be in the Gulf waters. Miss Agnes, fearing for the safety of her husband, would call upon Walter Fuller and his son, Leonard, to go out in the stormy weather in the sturdy and reliable "Seven Stars" to locate and bring Walter Anderson home. At times, it would be very difficult to persuade him to come in, but, after promising him a bologna sandwich, he would come in because he was always very hungry after having spent a considerable length of time at Horn Island.

On a summer afternoon Walter Fuller and his son, Leonard, were waiting for the tide to drop enough to get under the old wooden highway bridge. When approaching the bridge, the boat was unable to clear the bridge. Leonard shouted to back up, but the tide was extremely strong, and it carried the boat against the bridge, carrying the entire awning and cabin into the water. Walter Fuller was pinned under the wreckage as the boat began to tilt, and the water came rushing in. Leonard Fuller, on the bow of the boat, was able to push the debris off Walter and pull a board up to prize part of the cabin off his father. Retrieving the board, Leonard also prized the bow loose from the bridge, and he shouted for his father to throw the boat in gear. With the throttle wide open, the boat managed to pull away from the bridge. From that day on, Walter and Leonard both felt the blessing of the name of the "Seven Stars" was instrumental in keeping them from drowning on that day.

After the accident with the bridge, the hull of the boat was tied up for

several days to decide what to do. Walter Fuller decided to repair the boat himself. A shipyard was built with boat waves in front of the Fuller home on the Singing River. The boat was pulled up on dry dock for repair. All the top structure was removed from the boat, and a box cabin was built over the galley. A fantail deck was built on the stern. The boat was fitted with wench and hoist, and the boat was used as a shrimp boat from 1951-58.

Yet another incident well remembered by both Walter and Leonard happened during a night of shrimping. Walter had captained the "Seven Stars" in and out of the Singing River Dock a thousand times, but on one particular night, conditions were somewhat different. After a long night of shrimping and with an extremely good catch, Captain Fuller was ready to go in. There are two entrances to the Singing River, one is off Round Island where one lines up with Red Beacon and follows the buoys in with a north compass straight to the railroad bridge. The "Seven Stars" was shrimping in the Biloxi area around Ship Island, and Captain Fuller wanted to take the closest entrance into the river. The other entrance is the mouth of West River. After passing Graveline Bayou, one must follow parallel to the Beach until reaching Bayou LaMotte. This is the only way to miss a large sandbar. After reaching Bayou LaMotte, a sharp southeast turn must be taken until reaching Middle River marshes. From there, one must follow the marsh line northwest until reaching the railroad bridge. The night was very dark, so black, Walter could not see any of the lights from the beach houses. The compass was the only guidance one could depend on. In addition, the tide was low, and the "Seven Stars" pulled a four foot draft. Approaching offshore, close to the beach, the "Seven Stars" began to run aground. Captain Fuller kept feeling his way through the dark until the "Seven Stars" was brought to a hard, sudden, dead stop. He tried to maneuver the boat back and forth, but to no avail. Captain Fuller told his son to put the anchor over, and they would wait until morning light. Leonard tossed the anchor over only to hear the unwelcome sound of a thud. He took an oar to feel around, and he discovered they were high and dry on the beach. Leonard had been a lifeguard at Miss Kitty Shepherd's summer camp, and he knew the area very well. He told his father, "I will see you in the morning," and he jumped over on the beach and walked home. Leonard arrived early the next morning with a skiff and an outboard motor. The tide was high, and they were able to pull the "Seven Stars" back into deep water to complete the journey home and save the valuable "catch" of shrimp.

As the years rolled by, Walter became too old to "shrimp" anymore, and he decided to sell the "Seven Stars." Everyone in the family felt saddened by the sale because the "Seven Stars" had become such a part of their lives. Walter did, however, sell the boat with an understanding that the name would not be transferred with the boat. After the sale, the boat was used as a shrimp boat for a remaining two year period when it caught fire and burned to the waterline in 1960.

Until this day, all boats bought and enjoyed by the Leonard Fuller family have been named the "Seven Stars." Hoping this story of the "Seven Stars" will evoke fond and pleasant memories, Leonard Fuller has carefully preserved this history for his children, his grandchildren, and future descendants.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonard E. Fuller, a native of Gautier, is representative of five generations in the community. Leonard's grandfather, Leonard W. Fuller for whom he was named, came to Gautier in the middle 1800's. His father, Walter Fuller, was born in 1927 at the Old Place where the Fullers lived and worked with Walter Gautier in the sawmill business. Leonard was christened at St. Pierre's Episcopal Church on the bayou in 1934.

Leonard E. has been successful in an educational career. A student at Gautier Elementary in the 1940's, he returned to the school and retired as the school principal in 1988. Civic minded, Leonard served as City Councilman after the city incorporated. Promoting the city, he was elected president of the Chamber of Commerce (Gautier Area) to help bring about growth and business for the city. He has also served on many committees for the city.

Leonard was elected most outstanding male citizen of Jackson County by the Business and Professional Women's Association of Jackson County for his service to his community.

Leonard is devoted to his wife, Nita Grey, of 51 years. They have enjoyed traveling throughout the world and raising their children and grandchildren in Gautier.

